

Guarded

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The apostle is clear in his speaking of the Christians' inheritance. Not only is the inheritance reserved in heaven by God, He also guards us unto the inheritance.

It is we who need to be safeguarded from spiritual corruption. Even more fundamental than having the inheritance kept for us is to be ourselves kept for the inheritance. Thus Peter writes, "Who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5). Notice these three important words: "by," "through," and "unto."

"BY THE POWER OF GOD ARE GUARDED"

The inheritance is safe in heaven, but what about us? We are still here on earth with its temptations, miseries, and infirmities. God has a tender care for His people. He is always on guard for them. We may be attacked, but He will help us to overcome. We "are" (present tense) guarded. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will make mention of the name of Jehovah our God" (Psalm 20:7). "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Prov. 18:10).

Being kept is the effect of God's power, but this does not remove man's endeavor and care. "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto

God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6, 7). It is our work to trust and obey; His to guard.

"THROUGH FAITH"

By a patient, conquering faith, we are kept with the assistance of His grace. Only the faithful are guaranteed divine help and final salvation. "Withal taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one" (Eph. 6:16). This involves a trust that removes self and rests on Christ. The New Testament knows nothing about the idea of "once saved, always saved." God cannot guard us without our faith. It is the tap that lets the stream of His love flow in. God's power does not keep the person whose faith fails. "Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them make shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19). This thought is repeated elsewhere (2 Tim. 2:18; Heb. 3:12). God does not preserve the faithless and disobedient. It is those sheep who hear and follow the voice of Jesus who are protected (John 10:27-29). Paul encourages us to realize what God does for us when we walk by faith. "For God

gave us not a spirit of fearfulness; but of power and love and discipline" (2 Tim. 1:7). Yet it is not up to us alone for then we would all despair. God helps us when we believe!

"UNTO A SALVATION READY TO BE REVEALED"

What salvation does Peter have in mind? Perhaps this word has lost some of its appeal to us, and if so, let us shine it up again. The inheritance is ready (prepared, Vine), but it is not fully revealed. "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be" (1 John 3:2). We must endure in patience for that which is assured by God. There is another age, but in heaven. The ultimate and superlative salvation promised us must have its beginnings now. Why hope to be changed into something in heaven that you don't want to be changed into now? This is God's purpose in Christ, the church, the gospel. Let us not get distracted (Titus 1:2). "As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2).

"IN THE LAST TIME"

What a day that will be! Until then, God has promised to be with us. "The last time" is the time when the faithful will be fully known. Such can only be when Christ comes the second time. "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).